



Bloomfield Education Association

"The Voice of Bloomfield's Teachers"

Testimony of
Sue Sumberg

Before the

Appropriations Committee

RE:

HB 5117 AAC Portions of the State Budget Appropriating Aid to Municipalities
SB 1121 An Act Establishing A Task Force to Study the Distribution of State Funds to
Municipalities

April 5, 2011

Senator Harp, Representative Walker, and members of the Appropriations Committee,

My name is Sue Sumberg. I am a resident of Manchester. I also have taught in the Bloomfield school system for 24 years and I am the President of the Bloomfield Teachers Association. Thank you for this opportunity to address the distribution of state funds in the towns where I teach and live.

I am here today to address both House Bill 5117 AAC Portions of the State Budget Appropriating Aid to Municipalities and Senate Bill 1121 An Act Establishing A Task Force to Study the Distribution of State Funds to Municipalities.

My concern is that these bills do not adequately address one important piece of the State's commitment to funding local schools - the minimum level of funding a town is required to budget known as the Minimum Budget Requirement. For example, there is a proposal in this committee (HB6385 An Act Implementing the Budget Recommendations of The Governor Concerning Education) that would lower the minimum budget requirement by \$3,000 for each enrollee fewer than the previous year. According to data from the Legislature's Office of Fiscal Analysis, **over \$370,000 of funding for Bloomfield's schools could be swept from our public school budget.**

I am also concerned that the Bloomfield school budget has already been cut to bare bones. Last year our former superintendent presented a zero-budget increase by consolidating elementary schools and making innovative budgeting changes to control costs. However,

despite these cost reductions, the Town Council proceeded to cut our budget by \$ 670,000, enabled by similar legislation last year.

This year, our interim-superintendent again proposed a zero budget increase. Through innovative budgeting, Bloomfield has avoided teacher layoffs and maintained class sizes. But after two years of trimming the budget, there is simply nothing left to cut that won't impact students and their learning environment.

Nevertheless, at a recent Town Council meeting regarding the education budget a member said, "I guess we just have to accept this budget because the legislature won't let us cut this year." Statements like this one suggest that some elected municipal office holders want to cut first, and maybe ask questions later.

Yesterday, our new superintendent started in Bloomfield. What a shame it would be if his first few months would be about cutting our budget and not about his goals toward continuing our efforts to improve student achievement. I urge you to consider this information before acting on this bill.

I also want to point out that in my hometown of Manchester, enrollment is increasing. Yet there is no consideration given to increasing the MBR for towns with increasing enrollment. This means that as more students attend Manchester schools, the amount per pupil could go down, taking with it needed resources.

I urge the committee to ensure that the MBR is taken into consideration regarding HB 5117 and SB 1121. And I thank the committee for allowing me to draw attention to the impact of MBR changes proposed this year on Bloomfield and Manchester.

Thank you.